United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council asks Secretary-General to make indicative contingency plans for supplying humanitarian relief to Rwanda; says urgent and effective means of action must be considered.

+ Secretary-General, in South Africa, meets with outgoing President de Klerk; also meets with Presidents of Israel and Zimbabwe, and Prime Minister of Denmark.

+ Member States owe United Nations $3.02 billion as of 30 April; $1.01 billion owed to regular budget and $2.01 billion to peace-keeping.

+ Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information says United Nations must speak with one voice; DPI must ensure coordinated approach to many issues before Organization.

+ United Nations to convene meeting of major donors in The Hague tomorrow to discuss emergency needs in sub-Saharan Africa.

+ UNHCR expresses concern for safety of 13,000 Somali refugees in conflict-torn areas in southern Yemen.

+ International Law Commission considers establishment of international court dealing with crimes against peace and security at current session in Geneva.

+ UNICEF Executive Board, concluding annual session, adopts decision on empowerment of women and girls and reaffirms commitment to Africa.

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The Security Council has asked Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to undertake "indicative contingency planning" for the delivery of humanitarian aid to displaced persons in Rwanda. In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 6 May, Council President Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria) said urgent and effective means of action must be considered in view of the unabated violence there. The Council might, at a later date, ask for indications of the

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financial and logistical implications of an expanded United Nations or international presence in the area. Such a presence would assist the parties in Rwanda, monitor a cease-fire and help the resumption of the Arusha peace process.

The President stressed that the Council did not expect the Secretary-General to make definitive recommendations as consultations on future United Nations action were ongoing. He commended the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) for their exemplary work in very difficult circumstances.

Meanwhile, according to a United Nations spokesman, a Canadian plane carrying relief supplies from Nairobi was forced to turn back from Kigali this morning as shelling around the city's airport intensified. Both the Government and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) denied deliberately targeting the airport, where 150 UNAMIR troops are stationed.

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Continuing his visit to South Africa, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today had meetings in Johannesburg with President Ezer Weisman of Israel, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, and Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen of Denmark. The Secretary-General then travelled to Pretoria, where he met with outgoing South African President F.W. de Klerk. He was later scheduled to attend a dinner at the British Embassy in honour of Prince Philip and Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd.

Yesterday, Mr. Boutros-Ghali met with Chief Emeka Anyoku, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, and discussed cooperation between that organization and the United Nations. He then had meetings with his Special Representatives for Mozambique and Angola, Aldo Ajello and Alioune Blondin Beye. He also met with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Salim Salim, and discussed the situation in Rwanda. They dealt with efforts to promote a cease-fire and to provide humanitarian aid there. On Saturday, the Secretary-General met with Nelson Mandela, the President-elect of South Africa.

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As of 30 April, Member States owed the United Nations a total of $3.02 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $1.01 billion was for assessments for the regular budget and $2.01 billion was for peace-keeping operations.

The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed almost $300 million to the regular budget, and nearly $550 million to the peace-keeping budget, for the current year; it owed more than $230 million and $100 million respectively for prior years. Japan and the Russian Federation had regular budget

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contributions outstanding for the current year, but not for previous years. However, the Russian Federation owed more than $570 million in total peace-keeping contributions.

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The United Nations must speak with one voice, Samir Sanbar, Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, told the Committee on Information today as it began its sixteenth session. As the centre of information activities, the Department of Public Information (DPI) must ensure a coordinated approach to the multiple issues before the United Nations. It must also focus more sharply on the priority issues set by the membership and directed by the Secretary-General, he stressed.

Mr. Sanbar, who had just returned from Zagreb, said all peace-keeping information components should form an integral part of a well-defined United Nations information strategy. It was essential that the DPI participate in the earliest stages of a mission, and that an information strategy be viewed as a critical element in ensuring an active operation. While the Organization's success stories would not often make headlines, the DPI could work in partnership with other United Nations departments to improve the news, he concluded.

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The United Nations, with the support of the Dutch Government, will convene a meeting of major donors in The Hague tomorrow to discuss the emergency needs of sub-Saharan Africa. The Organization is extremely concerned over the fate of more than 21 million victims of natural and man-made disasters in the region. Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will urge donors to take a broad look at the situation, especially considering the plight of people in the Horn of Africa, Rwanda and Liberia.

United Nations agencies estimate that they will need $990 million for emergency relief programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa for the rest of the year -- $325 million for food aid, and $665 million for programmes and materials to assist people affected by drought and war.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has expressed deep concern for the safety of 13,000 Somali refugees in conflict-torn areas in southern Yemen. Some 6,000 refugees in a camp near Aden have been caught in crossfire between opposing nothern and southern Yemeni forces, and there have been reports of a major battle in the area. According to the UNHCR, the camp is particularly vulnerable because it is located near a regiment of northern Yemeni soldiers who are opposed to the Aden Government.

The UNHCR said it was worried that the camp's water supply, which must be pumped across the desert, could be be jeopardized by the fighting. Officials

were also concerned for the safety of some 1,300 Somali refugees of Yemani origin in two other camps in the coastal town of Al Mukallah.

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The establishment of an international criminal court, or another international trial mechanism, dealing with crimes against the peace and security of mankind is being considered by the International Law Commission at its forty-sixth session in Geneva. The programme of work for the Commission, which is meeting until 22 July, also covers State responsibility, the non-navigational uses of international water courses, and liability for the results of acts not prohibited by international law.

Last year, a Commission Working Group produced a draft statute for an international court, focusing on such issues as jurisdiction, applicable law, investigation and prosecution. The court will deal with crimes covered by international treaties, such as genocide or the treatment of prisoners of war, as well as those recognized as crimes under international or national law, such as drug-trafficking. The General Assembly has asked the Commission to give the draft statute priority consideration, with a view to completing its work, if possible, at the current session.

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Concluding its annual session on Friday, the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) adopted a decision on the empowerment of women and girls, aiming to integrate gender concerns in its country programmes. In another action, the Board reaffirmed its commitment to Africa as the region of greatest need and highest priority. It committed UNICEF to assisting African countries to fulfil the human development goals for the 1990s, as expressed at the 1990 Summit for Children.

The Board also called for UNICEF Executive Director James Grant to work with the international community to address the immediate and long-term needs of children affected by ethnic violence in Rwanda.

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